



*The recipe for*

# local and environmentally responsible food procurement

*in Quebec institutions*



Photo: Ludvyne Millien

Childcare sector fact sheet

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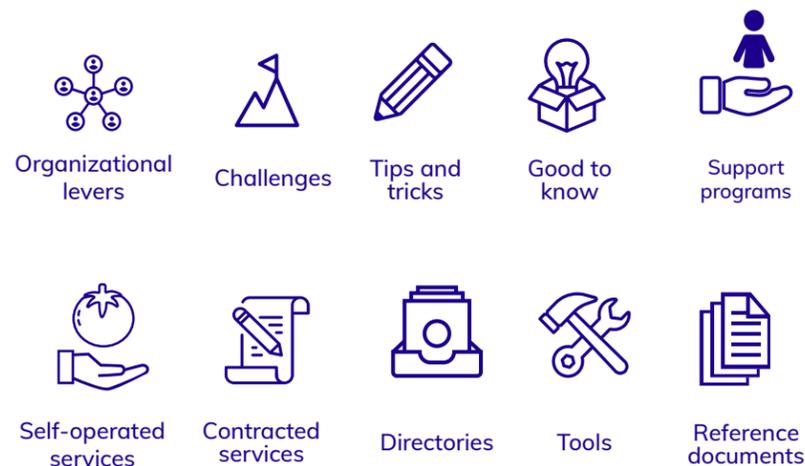
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# Preamble



Photo: CPE La Petite-Patrie

This fact sheet is intended as a practical tool to help managers and those responsible for food services in the childcare sector transition to a more sustainable food system that prioritizes healthy, local and environmentally responsible food. The step-by-step guide is based on several best practices that have been implemented in childcare establishments in Quebec.

Quebec's childcare sector is composed of early childhood educational services provided through childcare centres known as CPEs (Centres de la petite enfance), daycare centres and home childcare providers, as well as drop-in daycare centres. These settings play an essential role in preparing young children for their integration in society and provide a rich learning environment outside the family. They are also an opportunity to educate and raise awareness among families about the importance of healthy, local and environmentally responsible food. To learn more about the fact sheet project, see the fact sheet [The Recipe for Local and Environmentally Responsible Food Procurement In Quebec Institutions](#).

## Overview of the sector

There are approximately 300,000<sup>1</sup> recognized childcare spaces in Quebec, including 233,928 spaces subsidized by the government of Quebec and 67,246 non-subsidized daycare spaces.

These subsidized and non-subsidized spaces are covered by a total of **18,450 service offers**:<sup>2</sup>

- Over **1,500** CPE establishments
- Over **700** subsidized daycare centres
- Approximately **1,250** non-subsidized private daycare centres
- Approximately **15,000** home childcare providers

Initiatives promoting healthy, local and environmentally responsible food in Quebec's childcare sector can thus have a significant impact on the type of food that goes into the

 **300 000 meals**

and

 **600 000 snacks**

served daily to the children attending the establishments in this sector.

## Food service management in this sector

In Quebec, the majority of childcare centres prepare their meals and snacks on site. In 2015, self-operated food services accounted for 94% of food sales in the childcare sector, while contracted food services accounted for 6% of total sales. Procurement practices and food costs vary depending on the type of service offered, the context and the region. Childcare centres use the following sources to procure their food:<sup>3</sup>

-  **94% self-operated food services**
-  **6% contracted food services**

- [William.coop](#) and its group purchasing program for member CPEs;
- Distributors in their region;
- Local supermarkets or fruit and vegetable shops;
- Directly from a producer (fruits and vegetables, cheese, meat, etc.).

Often, the establishment's food manager(s) is responsible for managing all steps of the menu planning and preparation process. These include food purchasing, receiving and storing, menu development, meal preparation and service, and kitchen cleaning and maintenance.



# A Basic Recipe



For local and environmentally responsible food procurement in the childcare sector

## Ingredients

### Organizational levers

There are a number of organizational levers within this sector that can facilitate the shift to local and environmentally responsible procurement in the long term:



- A **motivated and versatile** director and food service manager;
- A set of **common values shared** by the board of directors, manager, staff and parents;
- An established **food policy** in the organization that can be adapted to include measures supporting local and sustainable food procurement;
- **Participation in support programs** such as CPE Durable, *Aliments du Québec au menu*, *Petits ambassadeurs de saveurs*, etc.

## Instructions

This step-by-step guide is an example of best practices. Feel free to adapt it to reflect the situation in your establishment. It is intended for childcare establishments that have a self-operated kitchen. For childcare centres that use a contracted food service management model, please refer to the [fact sheet for the education sector](#).



### 1. Take advantage of available resources

**Sign up for a recognition or support program to help organize your initiative and obtain support for your actions.** Experience shows that participating in these types of programs can lead to a more structured approach, while offering significant visibility for your project and raising awareness in the community. In addition to the training and networking opportunities they can offer, these resources can also help you reflect on and plan each step of your process.

Did you know that *Aliments du Québec* and *Équiterre* developed a recognition program designed specifically for institutions called *Aliments du Québec au menu*? This program recognizes innovative institutions by highlighting their efforts to incorporate more local food into their procurement processes. Watch the videos presenting six participating institutions, including the CPE La Petite-Patrie, [here](#).



Discover other available programs in the [Resources](#) section of this fact sheet!

### 2. Analyze your establishment's menu and purchasing processes in order to target your actions

Know your starting situation: Your menu probably already contains several locally sourced products. In addition to providing encouragement, knowing where you're starting from can help you to identify what local foods to look for and to set new goals.

#### • Quantify local foods:

- Make a list of your suppliers and identify the companies that offer Quebec-sourced products;
- Calculate the proportion (%) of local food already present in your orders over a year or another period. [This exercise](#) [in French] will help you target specific local foods that you can add to your menus.



#### • Gradually integrate local foods:

- Begin with a few symbolic local products that are easy to find (ex., apples, maple syrup, seasonal berries, fall squash, etc.);
- Identify which products have the most impact, with little or no extra cost (ex., eggs);
- Focus on one food category at a time (ex., seasonal vegetables, dairy products, etc.).

#### • Make it easier to add local foods to your menu:

- Develop a menu cycle with an increased focus on the seasons;
- Build greater flexibility into your menu preparation process so more products can be added when they are in season.

#### • Change your menus:

- Set aside time for coaching, support and training;
- [Learn about the organizations](#) that offer these services.



## Challenges

This sector faces several specific constraints that can complicate efforts to increase the amount of local and environmentally responsible food offered:



- Tight budget;
- Lack of time;
- Lack of support;
- Little knowledge of available local foods;
- Sub-optimal kitchen facilities and equipment (storage, freezing, etc.);
- Entrenched habits and resistance to change;
- Workforce instability;
- Lack of time set aside for continuous training.



Photo: Équiterre

- **Optimize your processes and invest more in local food:**
  - Reduce food waste at the source (adjust portions and serving practices to reduce waste on the plate, optimize the use of every food part, store food optimally, freeze leftovers instead of throwing them out, etc.);
  - Purchase some pre-cut or frozen local vegetables from Quebec to reduce processing in the kitchen.

### 3. Encourage your current suppliers to offer more local food and to identify food origin in their catalogues

Availability and difficulty finding local products offered by distributors or suppliers are two of the main obstacles to increasing local procurement. Unlike the retail sector, there is no standard requiring them to identify the origin of their products. Over the last few years, however, more and more distributors and suppliers have been making the effort to increase the visibility of local food.



Photo: Myriam Baril-Tessier

- **Ask your suppliers about the origin of their food.** Encourage them to clearly identify origin in their catalogue or inventory.
- **Identify companies that offer local and environmentally responsible food** and ask your distributors for these products. The more institutional clients demand them, the more suppliers will have an incentive to offer these products.
- **Mention to your suppliers that you are participating in programs** that require you to know the source of your food, including *Aliments du Québec au menu* or *Petits ambassadeurs de saveurs*.

### 4. Seek out new suppliers

Are your current suppliers unable to satisfy your requests? Then find new suppliers that offer a greater variety of local products. To do this:

- Consult existing local supplier lists; 
- Network with the other CPEs or daycares in your region and province that procure their food locally and share your finds (ex., broadline distributors more open to this type of request);
- Contact your Table de concertation bioalimentaire régionale (regional biofood consultation committee) for references and networking events such as producer-purchaser meetings; 
- **Make direct contact with the producers** of the products that interest you;
- **Ask potential new suppliers what distributors they're affiliated with.**



Photo: CPE La Petite-Patrie

### 5. Inform and sensitize your team

To ensure the long-term viability of this process, all of your organization's members must be on board and involved, including the board of directors, managers, food managers, educators, parents and children. To achieve this:

- **Offer training** to the members of the board of directors, managers, or food service managers, as needed;
- **Define the roles of each actor** in order to ensure a clear project framework and structure;
- **Communicate regularly with both your team and parents** to update them on developments. Show pride in the progress made;
- **Develop educational activities** related to the project.

### 6. Draft or amend your food policy to include values and principles that are important for your organization

This step puts an official stamp on your project and makes it part of your organization's DNA. Drafting and adopting a food policy is a long process. Here are some tools you may find helpful:

- Guide d'élaboration d'une politique alimentaire (AQCPE) [in French]; 
- Exemple de politique alimentaire (CPE La Petite-Patrie) [in French]. 



## Good to know



### *Time is precious!*

The issue of time and the associated cost in human resources are major concerns for any local procurement project and must be taken into account at each of the steps described above. Here are two potential solutions that can help make your work easier from the start:

**Plan your actions.** By preparing your project with a medium- and long-term horizon and by accepting to take one step at a time, you can spread the investment of time and resources over a longer period, making the actions more feasible.

**Create a working committee:** It is useful to form a committee composed of parents or employees (other than members of the board of directors) who can lend a hand or take charge of different aspects of the local procurement project (quantification of local foods, the search for suppliers, follow-up on certification and recognition programs, etc.). Be sure to choose volunteers who are autonomous and proactive. You will need to invest some time in training or coaching them, but the benefits will far outweigh the costs.



### *Good management pays off!*

Each year, CPEs and subsidized daycare centres receive funding from the Ministère de la Famille to cover food expenditures. Knowing what your food budget is can be very useful when seeking to implement a more sustainable menu.

#### **Here are some questions to guide you:**

- Does your food budget correspond to the funding provided by the Ministère de la Famille? (See the [MF's annual budget rules for childcare service providers.](#)) [in French]
- Does your budget evolve in keeping with the cost of food?
- What is the cost difference over a year if you opt for higher quality food?
- How much financial flexibility do you have in terms of food purchases?
- Have you implemented any measures to reduce food waste?
- Have you reduced the frequency of meat-based meals in your menu?
- Have you calculated the amount of meat served in a meal?
- Does the food service manager know what their annual, monthly or weekly food budget is?
- Does the food service manager have experience managing a food budget?
- Does the food service manager have the necessary qualifications to manage a food budget?
- What type of support could be offered to the food service manager to improve their management of the food budget?

*With the collaboration of Philippe Grand - AQCPE*



# Tips and Tricks



## *Change your practices and generate long-term savings*

In addition to their positive environmental impact, each of the following actions allows you to save money in the long run that can be reinvested in the purchase of local and environmentally responsible food.

- **Offer more vegetarian meals** to increase your purchasing power, reduce your environmental footprint and add more diversity to your menu:
  - Offer more vegetarian options by increasing the number of meatless meals served each week;
  - Foster familiarity by making half-vegetarian/half-meat recipes.
- **Reduce purchases of processed and ultra-processed food** to lower costs and improve the quality of the ingredients in your dishes;
- **Vary procurement sources** by supporting local food systems (short supply chain), such as direct selling by producers, farmers' markets, public markets, organic baskets, purchasing groups, etc.;
- **Reduce food waste** by storing food in optimal conditions, planning portions and needs and making better use of leftovers;
- **Eliminate disposable containers** to reduce purchase costs and environmental impacts.



## *Opt for more seasonal menus!*

To facilitate the use of seasonal local food and take advantage of volume discounts, the following practices should be considered:

- **Increase the amount of cold room space** for storage fruits and vegetables such as apples, squash, onions, potatoes, root vegetables, etc.;
- **Increase freezer space** for the storage of seasonal local products (ex., fruits, vegetables, fish, etc.);
- **Do your own processing and freezing of seasonal products** while they are available in abundance (ex., berries, herbs, tomatoes, bell peppers, zucchini, leafy greens, etc).

By adopting these practices, you can order larger quantities and reduce the number of deliveries.



Photo: CPE La Petite-Patrie



# Inspiring Institution



A personal recipe:  
CPE La Petite-Patrie



Photo: CPE La Petite-Patrie

“Don't hesitate to get the kids involved in your project. Let them create their own vegetable garden, help out, taste the food that they've grown or cooked, or participate in educational activities.”

Jocelyne Labrie, Executive Director, CPE La Petite-Patrie

## Rosemont - La Petite-Patrie, Montreal

In 2014, acting on a suggestion by a parent on the board of directors, the management of this CPE decided to embark on a project to integrate local and environmentally responsible food in its procurement practices. They signed up for a sustainable development counselling and certification program called CPE durable, launched by ENvironnement JEUnesse (ENJEU). Taking one step at a time, the CPE first asked its local fruit and vegetable shop to stock more local produce and found a local meat supplier. It then created five dishes made with **50%** locally sourced ingredients, earning recognition from the Aliments du Québec au menu program, which it had joined in 2017. Then, in 2018, the CPE was recognized by this program for **procuring the majority of its food from Quebec**. In fall of 2019, the CPE finalized and adopted its new food policy, which incorporates the principles of local and sustainable procurement.

## Ingredients for success

- ✓ Since food budgets are based on the number of children, the CPE streamlined its material and human resources by having a single kitchen for both of its facilities, which generated savings in labour, equipment and maintenance;
- ✓ The application of sustainable practices to all purchasing and at all levels (furniture, toys, stationery, etc.) also led to savings in the medium term and made it possible for the CPE to increase its investment in local and organic products.

## Word of advice from the director

Allow yourself to take small steps and to move forward at a pace that works for your organization!

## Recap



- 160 children
- 2 facilities
- 1 shared kitchen
- 40 employees, including:
- 1 cook and 1 assistant cook

### Main suppliers:

- Coop William via Alimplus
- Local fruit and vegetable shop

### Certification and recognition

- CPE durable
- Aliments du Québec au menu



# Inspiring Institution



A personal recipe:  
CPE Alouette



“Adding a little something local to our menu every day turned out to be the first step toward a seasonal menu that appeals to our little ones.”

Mélanie Munger, Food services manager at CPE Alouette

## La Baie, Saguenay - Lac-Saint-Jean

Initially, this CPE's food service manager wasn't convinced of the feasibility of increasing the CPE's local procurement, admitting that, "I couldn't have been more sceptical!" But following a presentation of Zone Boréale's Petits ambassadeurs de saveurs program, she changed her mind and decided to get on board. She won the support of management and set an initial goal of offering at least a little something local on the menu every day. Through contact with new suppliers and producers, she began to discover more and more local products, and, gradually, **milk, cheese, eggs, sausages, maple syrup and regional berries were added to the menu**. In addition, the Petits ambassadeurs program includes educational activities for children and training for food service managers. The support offered by Zone Boréale also made a big difference. Thanks to the opportunities for networking and sharing, the motivation to "go local" really caught on!

## Ingredients for success

- ✓ A comprehensive inventory of food products and the substitution of several items with a local version;
- ✓ Participation in a support and capacity-building program greatly facilitated contact with local producers.

## Word of advice from the food manager

Keep an open mind and be prepared to step outside your comfort zone!

## Recap



- 80 children
- 1 facility
- 1 kitchen
- 27 employees, including:
- 1 cook and 1 assistant cook

### Main suppliers

- Colabor (distributor)
- Dufort fruits et légumes
- Fromagerie Boivin
- Viande Perron
- Laiterie Nutrinor
- Berry farmers

### Certification and recognition

- Aliments du Québec au menu





# Inspiring Institution



A personal recipe:  
CPE Jardin des Frimousses



“Instead of planning my menu every two months, I plan one week ahead. That way, I can take advantage of specials on local products when they're available.”  
Isabelle Girard, food service manager at CPE Jardin des Frimousses

## Borough of Lachine, Montreal

The values aligned with environmentally responsible food were already part of this CPE's DNA when a new, like-minded food service manager joined the team in 2018. To help structure its actions, the CPE began by joining the CPE durable program and implementing measures to **increase local procurement and reduce food waste** within the establishment. Thanks to a networking event for buyers and producers organized by its regional biofood consultation committee, the CiBIM, (Conseil des industries bioalimentaires de l'Île de Montréal), it found a poultry supplier in Quebec and, in the summer of 2019, began purchasing directly from Jardins Carya, a producer of local, organic fruits and vegetables in Montreal's West Island. In addition, the CPE planted a small vegetable garden on site, providing an opportunity to initiate the children to the process of growing the fruits, vegetables and fresh herbs used in the kitchen. To further develop this educational component, the CPE also obtained funding from the organization 100 degrés allowing it to offer teaching activities on the theme of local, healthy and sustainable food. For its next step, the CPE's board wants to draft a food policy that integrates its new approach.

## Ingredients for success

- ✓ The enthusiasm and motivation of the director and the food service manager;
- ✓ Excellent budget and inventory management, including steps to reduce food waste by implementing "leftover Fridays,"<sup>4</sup> which made it possible to reinvest nearly 20% of the food budget in local and environmentally responsible food.

## Word of advice from the food manager

Encourage one or more distributors to specialize in offering local food products for the institutional market!

## Recap



- 160 children
- 2 facilities
- 2 kitchens
- 45 employees, including:
- 2 cooks
- 2 custodians (1hr/day in the kitchen)

### Main suppliers

- William coop via Alimplus
- Dubé Loiselle
- Jardin Carya

### Certification and recognition

- CPE durable
- Aliments du Québec au menu



# Inspiring Institution



Home childcare initiative  
Pilot project involving 10 home childcare providers



## Boroughs of Saint-Laurent and Saint-Léonard

Extenso, a reference centre for nutrition, worked with a group of 10 home childcare providers interested in increasing the proportion of local food offered in their meals and snacks. The goal was to provide them with coaching and support over a one-year period in order to help them **integrate local food products in their menus**.

The 10 participating home childcare providers experimented with four-week menus – one for each season – as well as four thematic menus (Valentine's Day, Halloween, Harvest Day, Summer Festival), all of which were based on **Quebec-sourced foods from all food groups that were easy to find in regular grocery stores and supermarkets**. Each participating childcare service tested easy-to-make recipes that were served to the children. Afterwards, they gave their appreciation of the recipes as well as feedback about the procurement process. The recipes were adjusted based on these comments and any problems raised were discussed with the MAPAQ.

The recipes (120), purchasing lists and videos of the preparation of several recipes (24) will be made publicly available on the website Nos Petits Mangeurs in late summer 2020. The project is funded by the MAPAQ.

There are nearly **15,000 home (or family) childcare providers** in Quebec. Family childcare providers often work alone or in pairs in their homes. They usually cook for groups of six to nine children up to the age of 5, depending on the number of educators and the child/educator ratio in effect. The operators of these services often shop and cook for their own families and the children under their care at the same time. Procurement patterns thus reflect the eating habits of the home childcare provider and their family. Their main sources of procurement are the retail stores used by the general public, such as supermarkets and local fruit and vegetable shops.





# Resources



## Support, recognition, certification and accreditation programs

- **Équiterre** is an environmental organization that offers concrete solutions in order to foster ecological choices that are both healthy and equitable. In the area of food procurement, Équiterre is committed to facilitating the implementation of a sustainable food system by developing joint projects with partners and offering consulting services.
- **Aliments du Québec au menu** is a recognition program created by Aliments du Québec and Équiterre to promote the use of Quebec products in institutional menus.
- **CPE durable** is a sustainable management counselling and certification program created by ENvironnement JEUnesse for Quebec's childcare services.
- The **Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance (AQCPE)** is a network of social economy enterprises representing the interests of the vast majority of CPEs and serving as the coordinating office (BC) in Quebec. Its "Saine alimentation" service promotes putting high-quality food on the menu for toddlers by offering CPEs support, training and analysis (menus and food policy).
- The **Petits Ambassadeurs de saveurs de la Zone boréale** is a coalition of educational childcare centres dedicated to increasing the awareness and use of local food products from the Saguenay - Lac-Saint-Jean region. It is supported by the Table agroalimentaire Saguenay - Lac-Saint-Jean.
- The **Tables de concertation bioalimentaire du Québec** co-facilitate, mobilize and coordinate the efforts of various actors in the regional biofood sector (ex., producers, processors, restaurant owners, retailers, development organizations, regional county municipalities [MRC], etc.). [in French]



Note: For support from nutritionists or dietary technicians when developing your menus, don't hesitate to get in touch with CEGEPs and universities that offer training programs in this field. This type of applied project can be extremely beneficial both for interns and your food service!



## Directories, lists and networks for finding local foods

- [Directory of local and organic food providers](#)
- [List of livestock and crop producers in Quebec \(MAPAQ\)](#) [in French]
- [Aliments du Québec directory](#)
- [Quebec Seasonal Produce Calendar](#)
- [Manufacturers, Wholesalers, Industrial-Related Service Companies search engine \(ICRIQ\)](#)
- [Pêchés ici, mangés ici: Directory of Quebec fish and seafood \(MAPAQ\)](#) [in French]
- [Fraîcheur Québec](#) [in French]
- [William coop](#) [in French]
- [Family Farmers Network](#)
- [Arrivage: approvisionnement professionnel responsable, local et direct](#) [in French]



## Useful tools

- [Aliments du Québec au menu quantification table](#)
- [Guide to Sustainable Menus](#)
- Example of a [food policy](#) (CPE La Petite-Patrie)
- [Food Education Kit](#) (educational activities)
- [CAPÉ technical guide](#): For information on the effective storage and conservation of local and organic products, contact: [info@capecoop.org](mailto:info@capecoop.org).



## Reference documents

- [Guide d'élaboration d'une politique alimentaire \(AQCPE\)](#) [in French]
- [Cadre de référence Gazelle et Potiron](#) (Ministère de la Famille du Québec) [in French]

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## Credits

Icons: © The Noun Project, Inc

## Notes

- 1 [Based on data as at December 31, 2018](#) on the website of the Ministère de la Famille.
- 2 [Based on data as at December 19, 2019](#) on the website of the Ministère de la Famille.
- 3 Definitions of the different types of food service management.
- 4 The French word is touski, a contraction of "tout" and "ce qui reste," which literally means "everything that's leftover."

If you use the print version of this fact sheet, all of the websites identified can be accessed by clicking on the link provided in the fact sheet.

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